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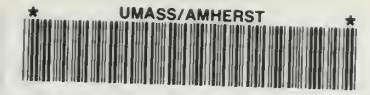

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RISK/NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PAROLE OUTCOME IN MASSACHUSETTS: AN EVALUATION STUDY

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by
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May 1985

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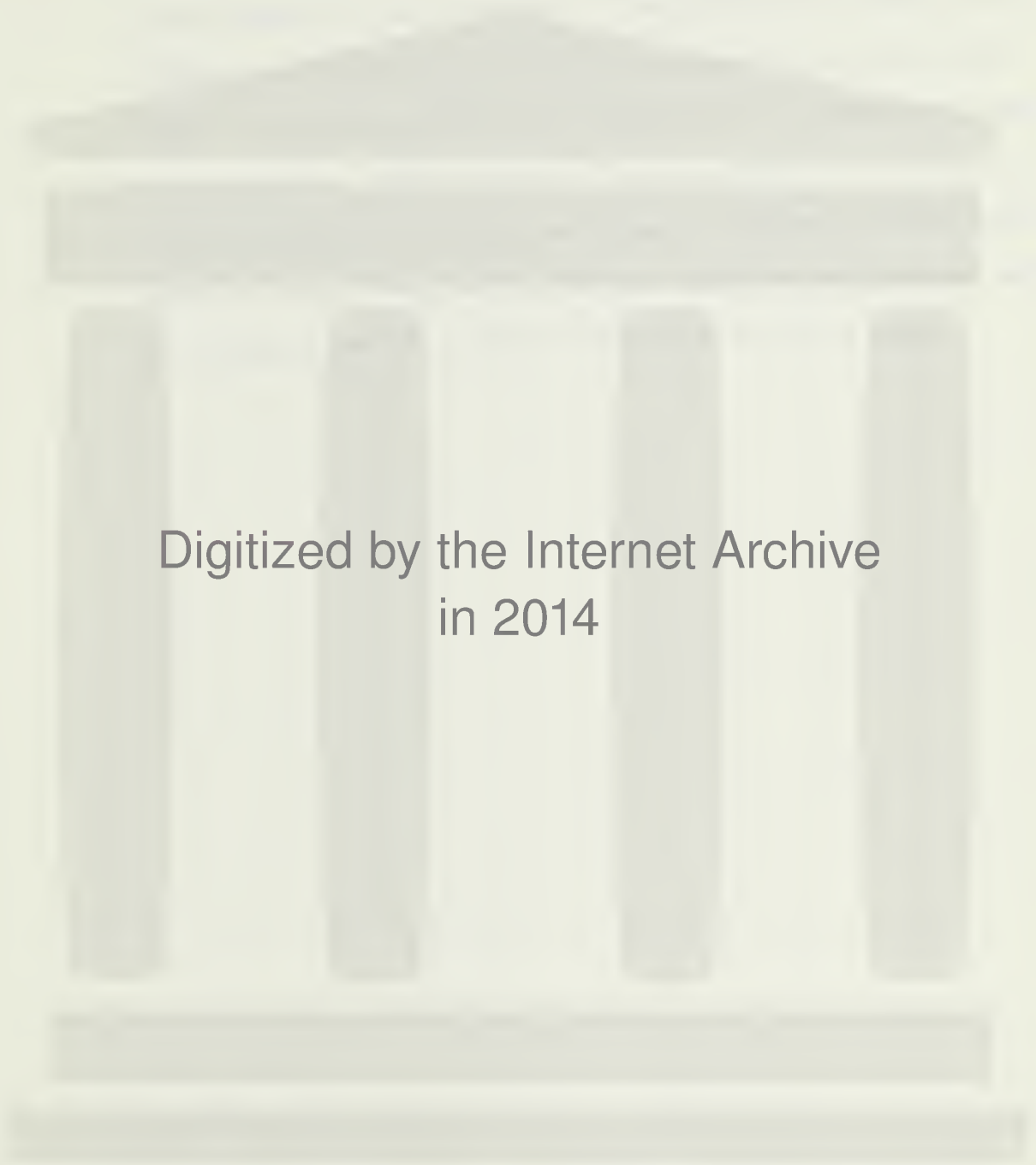
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ABSTRACT

Risk/Needs Assessment and

Parole Outcome in Massachusetts:

A Study in Predictive Validity

May, 1985

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Efforts to develop and validate rating or research instruments that predict probation or parole outcomes from socio-psychological or crime-related characteristics of clients are nothing new to criminology and correction. In fact, over the past half century, literally hundreds of studies have attempted with varying degrees of success to test instruments that offer promise of improving decision-making about, probation or parole.

In recent years the most popular use of prediction instruments by practitioners has been "risk/needs assessment" of clients; that is, a level or strategy of probation or parole supervision is linked to a combination of an assessment of client needs (health, emotional stability, vocational needs, employment, etc.) and a profile of factors associated with high-risk on probation or parole (history of drug or alcohol problems, previous failure on parole or probation, irregular employment, etc.). Developed in 1976, the Wisconsin Risks/Needs Assessment has served as a model of this approach, which has led to similar instruments in other states. In 1982, for example,

Massachusetts developed a modified version of the Wisconsin Risk/Needs Assessment for use in its parole system. Parole officers complete an initial risk assessment consisting of eleven items; a second score is derived from nine items related to the social/personal needs of the parolee. A combined score is then linked to level or type of parole supervision.

While risk/needs appears to enjoy increasing popularity nationwide, to date relatively few studies testing it's validity have appeared in the published literature and among those that have data offer conflicting conclusions as to it predictive validity. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to shed light on the predictive power of the "Risk/Needs Assessment" approach; first, by providing a succinct summary of studies on parole prediction; and second, by examining data collected from the files of 198 parolees in the Massachusetts system where the risk/needs approach was utilized to set supervision requirements. In each case, data on parole outcome, risk/needs score and post-release adjustment factors (marital and social relationships, employment, parole requirements, etc.) are analyzed.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1982 the Massachusetts Parole Board adopted a Risk/Needs Assessment instrument based on a model developed, validated and presently used in Wisconsin. This device aids parole officers in classifying parolees into levels of supervision according to their risk of recidivism and their need for services. Under this system, an initial risk/needs assessment form is completed for each parolee who will be on parole for six months or more (See Appendix A for risk/needs instrument). The level of supervision[1] (maximum,moderate, minimum) is then determined by the scores generated by the instrument. Parole officers who feel the level of supervision dictated by these scores is not appropriate have the option to override the decision. Theoretically, parolees who score lowest on the risk/needs assessment should be more successful on parole than those with higher scores and should therefore require less intensive supervision. This knowledge allows parole personnel to be used more efficiently. Clear (1983:219) points out that the ability to distinguish between high and low risk offenders is of crucial importance to those who must manage community supervision agencies:

> "If it is known that about one-third of a subgroup of clients will reoffend, while about one-twentieth of another group another will do so, then it is reasonable to expect that closer supervision will be given to the former group. The use of a risk screening device places management in a position of accountability for the manner in which it uses its agency's resources to handle clients."

1/ In Massachusetts maximum supervision requires a minimum of one in-person and one collateral contact per month. Moderate supervision requires a minimum of one in-person visit and one collateral contact during a quarterly period. Minimum supervision requires a minimum of one semi-annual in-person visit and one quarterly collateral contact.

Prior to the implementation of the risk/needs assessment, the Chairman of the Massachusetts Parole Board felt the agency should be more accountable to both the public, in terms of safety and to the legislature, in terms of justification for funding necessary in carrying out the agency's function. He was also concerned with establishing a more consistent way of classifying parolees into levels of supervision while at the same time gaining a better understanding of the parolee in Massachusetts in order to improve the quality of services that could be offered. It was concerns such as these that led to the eventual adoption of a Case Classification System of which the Risk/Needs Assessment is an essential part.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Predictive Variables

A review of the literature reveals that researchers in the field of corrections have been involved in an effort to predict parole outcome for over fifty years. Some of the early pioneers in this field include Warner, Hart and Burgess. Samuel Warner (1923) examined 69 factors (e.g. prior record, prison conduct, length of incarceration) on 680 prisoners sentenced to the Massachusetts Reformatory between 1912 and 1921. He concluded that of the 69 factors only two (pre-parole criminal record and psychiatric evaluation) were significant predictors of parole outcome. That same year, Hornell Hart (1923) re-analyzed Warner's data by applying tests of statistical significance and concluded that 30 of the 69 items were clearly related to parole outcome.

Perhaps the most famous of the early pioneers, Ernest Burgess (1928) examined the records of some 3,000 parolees from several Illinois prisons in search of variables related to parole outcome. He identified 22 relevant variables which distinguished parole successes from failures. These variables included: nature of offense, number of criminal associates, parental status, prior record, length of sentence and others. Then, by giving a point to every variable that had a violation rate lower than the overall rate, he computed a score for each parolee. The relationships between scores and violation rates was generally accepted as adequate to affirm the feasibility of parole prediction tables (Dean and Duggan, 1968) The salient factor score used since 1973 by the Federal Parole Commission to aid in decision-making is based on the model developed by Burgess (Hoffman and Beck, 1974).

During the 1930's prediction research acquired a prominent role in the field of corrections. In an attempt to improve on the Burgess method, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1930) assigned different weights to items displaying a relatively high relationship with parole outcome. The results of their study revealed, however, that their method offered no improvement in the ability to predict parole outcome over the Burgess method.

Five years later Laune (1935) tried a different research approach. He felt that intimate personal knowledge about a parolee could add to more accurate predictions of parole success and failure than any objective data found in a prison record. In his study, he

used the opinions of several inmates who intimately knew 150 prospective parolees and found a moderate correlation between their ratings and the Burgess score. A later validation study of these inmate ratings indicated that they were no better, but no worse than objective scores (Ohlin and Lawrence, 1952).

Since this time dozens of studies have been conducted in an effort to determine which variables are the most significant predictors of parole outcome. While all such studies are not cited here a few examples illustrate this point. Glaser (1954) conducted a study which revealed differences in rates of parole failure by type of crime, age at release, age at first arrest, age at first leaving home and the extent of an offenders prior record. More recently Buikhuisen and Hoekstra's (1974) follow-up study on parolees indicated that only two items--number of previous convictions and number of times the offender had moved before sentencing--contributed to parole failure. After reviewing seventy-one studies which examined the relationship between biographical predictors and recidivism Pritchard (1979) concluded that the offense of auto theft, stability of employment, age at first arrest, living arrangements, current income and history of opiate or alcohol abuse appear to be the most stable predictors of recidivism. These findings are similar to those reported in an 18 year follow-up study of parolees conducted by Kitchener et al. (1977).

Finally a recent study by Wish et al. (1983) revealed a significant difference in recidivism rates among persons who had drugs in their system and those that did not. He recommended that the use of drugs, especially heroin, should be weighted more heavily than other factors being used in attempts to predict future criminal behavior. Many of

the items found to be significantly related to parole outcome in these studies are also included on the Massachusetts Risk/Needs Assessment. Therefore, they will be analyzed to determine their relationship with parole outcome.

Prediction Instruments

The literature reveals that, although they were first developed and available in the 1930's the widespread use of predictive instruments is a fairly recent phenomenon. Evjen (1962) conducted a study which disclosed that only four of the forty-eight state correctional agencies he contacted were using predictive aids in making parole related decisions. However, according to the National Institute of Corrections (1981), the use of risk assessment instruments as part of the parole decision making process has expanded dramatically in recent years. Traditionally, parole related decisions were made without the use of classification instruments. For example, in Massachusetts prior to the use of the risk/needs assessments parole officers classified virtually all new parolees into maximum supervision for at least the first six months to year of the parole period. In recent years, however, statistical approaches to predicting risk have become increasingly popular among probation and parole officials.

The overriding motive for the development and use of predictive devices in probation and parole supervision is the desire to optimize the allocation of resources. Predictive devices, when properly designed should be able to distinguish between parolees who pose a high risk of engaging in future criminal activity and those who pose a

low risk. Then a parole officer can spend more time with high risk parolees in hopes that this extra time will reduce future criminality and spend less time with parolees who should be able to get along without it. In this way parole agencies are allowed to put their resources where it is most needed--with high risk offenders.

A probation and parole risk/needs assessment instrument that has been described as part of a "model system" by the National Institute of Corrections was developed in the State of Wisconsin and is currently receiving wide use by correctional agencies throughout the United States. This "model" instrument is used to classify probationers and parolees into levels of supervision according to their risk of recidivism and their need for services. The risk scale itself has two main dimensions: prior criminal record, and social factors. Six items are scored under prior criminal record:(1) age at first conviction, (2) prior probation/parole supervision, (3) revocations,(4) felony convictions, and (5) number and (6) type of prior offenses. Social variables include: (1) address changes, (2) employment, (3) alcohol and drug problems, and (4) attitude. Although there is no formal discretion category, the latter three variables are obviously influenced by subjective assessments. The needs assessment scale used in conjunction with the risk instrument includes eleven variables rated (largely on subjective assessments) by the parole officer. All of the items used on the risk scale were found by researchers in Wisconsin to have a strong statistical relationship with parole outcome, while the needs scale was included because the items represent what officials felt were categories of needs most

commonly faced by probationers and parolees. So, in effect, the level of supervision assigned to clients is based on either their scores related to risk of further criminal behavior or their scores related to need for services or both. The client is assigned to the highest level of supervision indicated by either scale.

The literature reveals that for the most part predictive aids, such as the Wisconsin model, are very effective in distinguishing offenders by the levels of risk they pose to commit future criminal behavior. For instance, the "salient factor score" developed by researchers at the United States Board of Parole has been used to aid in thousands of Federal parole decisions throughout the United States since November 1, 1973 (Hoffman and Beck, 1974). Using nine items or "salient factors," developers of this device are able to classify parolees into four risk categories: very good, good, fair and poor. A validation study of the device revealed that about 92 percent of those parolees rated as very good risks, 79 percent rated as good risks, 68 percent rated as fair risks, and 55 percent of those rated as poor risks had favorable parole outcomes (Hoffman and Beck, 1974).

A recently published study by Wormith and Goldstone (1984) describes how predictive aids were used to categorize parolees according to their potential risk. Of those parolees considered a very good risk, 92 percent had successful parole outcomes, while those considered as poor risks had only a 45 percent rate of success on parole.

The 1984 version of the Iowa Risk Assessment was shown to effectively differentiate parolees according to their risk. The findings reveal that those parolees rated as excellent risk had a

parole success rate of 93 percent, those rated as good risks a 76 percent success rate, those rated as poor risks a 46 percent success rate and those rated as very poor risks had the lowest, a 22 percent rate of success on parole (Fischer, 1984).

In all of the above mentioned work with predictive instruments, there was a consistent positive relationship between the devices prediction of risk and parole outcome. That is, the higher the risk determined by the device, the Higher the percentage of parolees who had unsuccessful parole outcomes. As mentioned earlier, the ability to distinguish between high and low risk offenders is of crucial important to those officials who must manage community supervision agencies. With this knowledge caseloads can be assigned with those parolees who pose the greatest threat to society given more intensive supervision than those who pose the least threat.

Although the literature provided many studies regarding the overall abilities of predictive instruments to categorize clients according to their risk, only two studies were found that analyzed the relationship between the individual items used on the scales and actual probation or parole outcomes. Interestingly, both of the instruments studied, like the Massachusetts instrument, were based on the Wisconsin "model".

The first was an unpublished study conducted by Kratcoski for the state of Ohio's Parole Board in 1982. He found that nine of the ten items used to determine a parolee's risk were significantly related to parole outcome. These included the following items: prior felony, age at arrest, alcohol problem, drug problem, prior arrest within five

years, time employed, prior incarceration, prior supervision and prior revocation. The one item used on the Ohio Risk Assessment, which was found not to be significantly related to parole outcome was age at institutionalization.

The second study offered findings that were quite contradictory to the Ohio study. In 1984 Wright and Associates conducted a validation study of the Wisconsin Risk/Needs Assessment which was adopted by the New York City Probation Department. This instrument was used to classify a sample of New York City probationers. Wright found that only four of the eleven items on the risk scale were significantly related to probation outcome. These were: change orientation, responsibility, age at first conviction and number of prior revocations. The items found by Wright to be unrelated to outcome were: address changes, percentage of time employed, alcohol usage, drug usage, prior periods of supervision, prior revocation and prior conviction for any indicated offense.

These two validation studies begin to reveal some of the problems that emerge with the use of predictive instruments. While almost all of the items used on one instrument were found to be significantly related to outcome less than half of the items used on a similar instrument were found to be significant. Problems such as these also arose in the study of the Massachusetts Risk/Needs Assessment and will be discussed later in the findings section of this paper.

The above discussion implies that although not all predictive instruments are infallible when used properly such devices can be feasible and consistent aids to parole and probation decision-makers.

Yet regardless of the obvious advantages that predictive instruments seem to offer, researchers over the last 50 years have criticized and cited many limitations that are associated with the use of predictive aids (Gottfredson, 1967; Nicholson, 1968; Hoffman and Beck 1974; Hemple et al. 1976; Wright et al. 1984).

Limitations and Criticisms of Predictive Devices

The literature reveals that there is much skepticism associated with the use of devices to predict parole outcome. Gottfredson (1967) claimed devices could be invaluable tools if properly constructed but by their very nature they are limited in scope. That is, there may be important elements in certain cases not addressed by the device that the decision-maker must consider.

Another limitation common to predictive devices is that they predict outcome for groups and not for individuals. That is, an actuarial device may be able to tell quite accurately the percentage of parolees in a particular risk category that will fail, but it cannot identify which ones will fail. When a parolee is released to supervision the decision-maker has no precise way to tell if he/she will succeed or fail. All that is known is the percentage of parolees with similar characteristics who may be expected to succeed or fail on parole. Perhaps Beck and Hoffman (1974:203) put it best:

> "In this regard, using an actuarial parole aid is a little like using a weather report that says there will be a 60% chance of rain. What the weather report actually means is that on similiar days it rained 60% of the time. It does not tell whether or not it will actually rain today. Nevertheless, such information can be useful in deciding whether or not to carry an umbrella."

A third limitation of predictive instruments is that they are based primarily on information found in an inmate's record.

Reliability studies have found inmate records to contain inaccurate or even contridictory information (Singer and Gottfredson, 1973). Such flaws hinder the predictive power of any device.

Still another limitation of predictive devices cited by many researchers (Van Alstyne and Gottfredson, 1978; Glaser, 1955; Dean and Duggan, 1968; Brown, 1974; Wormith and Goldstone, 1984) is that the data employed in prediction schemes consists only of those legal and demographic characteristics that are readily available from a parolee's record. Although these data are easily available to researchers, they are static measures that do not account for personal attributes or developments that could affect one's post-release outcome (Wormith and Goldstone, 1984; Buikhuisen and Hoekstra, 1974; Dean and Duggan, 1968). Brown (1978) suggested the inclusion of vocational training in prison, plans upon release, prison staff evaluations, educational training and incidence of disciplinary reports as variables that could influence parole outcome.

Researchers have also cited a major technical issue that involves the use of statistical prediction schemes over time and jurisdiction. (Hemple et al., 1976; Nicholson, 1968; Wormith and Goldstone, 1984; Clear et al., 1984). Hemple (1976) explains that statistical tables are not universally applicable; that they have to be revised and tested periodically to meet changing conditions; that the tables consider only past and present factors; and that in the field of corrections, "we are dealing with personalities not digits". For example, the results of a study conducted in Canada by Wormith and Goldstone (1984) could not be realistically generalized to other

populations since one-third of the inmate population they studied were native Americans (Indian, Metic or Eskimo) who as a group were scored as relatively high risks. Hemple (1976) suggested revalidation of the instrument be conducted every two years especially if the system was devised in another jurisdiction.

Another complaint researchers have had with the use of predictive devices is the failure of paroling agencies to make greater use of subjective or clinical judgements to predict parole outcome (Nicholson, 1968). By incorporating clinical judgements into the predictive scheme decision-makers are allowed to consider many important elements not accounted for when using only a predictive device. To this end, some researchers (Grant, 1962; Nicholson 1968) have recommended a combined use of clinical and statistical prediction methods to improve the overall accuracy of predicting parole outcome.

To satisfy this recommendation, the United States Board of Parole, at the federal level, and Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and Wisconsin at the state level, give decision-makers (Parole Officers in Massachusetts) a subjective override option as part of the risk/needs assessment. In Massachusetts if a parole officer feels a different level of supervision would be more appropriate for a certain parolee he/she has the option to override the decision dictated by the risk/needs score.

ORIGIN OF THE RISK/NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Prior to the administration of the current Chairman, an Ad Hoc Case Management Committee was established at the Massachusetts Parole

Board in 1980. The Chair, at this time, felt the agency should be more accountable to both the public in terms of safety and the legislature in terms of justification for funds necessary in carrying out the agency's function. He was also concerned with gaining a better understanding of the parolee in Massachusetts in order to improve the quality of services that could be offered.

The former Chairman, Brian Callery, directed that the Case Management Committee continue the work of exploring case management systems and techniques and make recommendations to him regarding a case management system for the Massachusetts Parole Field Services Division. In November, 1980, the Chairman expanded the original committee to include representatives from each regional office, both supervisors and line staff. The committee at that time had two major objectives.

1. Develop a set of recommendations regarding a Case Management System and,
2. Prepare a Field Services Manual to contain the policy and procedures of Field Services Operations.

In late 1980 the Case Management Committee explored classification systems and reviewed case management materials from other states and received short term technical assistance from the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), which provided two all day orientation sessions on case management to the committee in December, 1980 and January, 1981. Through this process, the Massachusetts Parole Board became aware of NIC's Model Probation/Parole Management Information/Classification System.

In February, 1981, the Massachusetts Parole Board requested to be considered as a participant in the Model program since the NIC model contained four major components thought essential for a well designed Case Management System. These components are: Risk/Needs Assessment, Client Management Classification, Workload and Management Information System.

In June, 1981, after approval of a Case Management grant application, the Massachusetts Parole Board was accepted in to the Model Program. In October, 1981, nine parole staff attended a week long orientation in Boulder, Colorado. This group was designated as the Case Management Implementation Team. The result of this orientation was an eighteen month timeline for implementation. During this time period, technical assistance was provided by NIC Consultants.

An important component of the Case Management System and the focus of this paper is the Risk/Needs Assessment. This instrument is used to classify parolees into levels of parole supervision according to their risk of continued criminal activity and their need for services. In 1982, the Massachusetts Parole Board developed and implemented a modified version of the "model" Wisconsin Risk/Needs Assessment.

MODIFICATION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS RISK/NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Researchers at the Massachusetts Parole Board realized that using a predictive aid was a new experience and could possibly present some

problems. With this in mind, they felt the instrument should be kept as simple as possible and be relatively easy for parole officers to use. This belief led to the modification of the Wisconsin instrument that was to be used in Massachusetts.

The risk/needs assessment used in Massachusetts differs from the Wisconsin model in many different ways. Unlike the Wisconsin risk scale which uses two or more values or weights for each risk item, the values used in Massachusetts are dichotomized to include only whether a certain risk characteristic is present or not.

An illustration of how a risk item appears on the Wisconsin scale is the following:

Number of Address Changes in last twelve months; 0=none
2=one
3=two or more

In Massachusetts this same item appears with only two values:

Number of Address Changes in last twelve months; 0=none
1=one or more

Another difference between the two states' risk scales is the scores given for the risk item "Conviction for an Assaultive Offense." This item is included on both scales, not because of the strong statistical relationship it has with parole outcome, but to ensure that parolees who have committed prior assaultive offenses be given the the maximum supervision that is available in hopes that this will deter future assaultive behavior. In Wisconsin, parolees who have committed prior assaultive offenses are given a score of 15 which automatically places them under the maximum supervision level. In Massachusetts, however, parolees possessing this characteristic

receive a score of five which, according to the matrix (see Appendix B) used to determine the supervision level, could possibly place the parolee into less than maximum supervision.

The scales used in both states to assess the needs of parolees are very similar. The only difference is that the Massachusetts needs scale is comprised of only nine items while the Wisconsin needs scale includes eleven. The Massachusetts scale does not make use of the needs items "Financial Management" and "Sexual Behavior" which do appear on the Wisconsin Needs Assessment.

After the risk/needs assessment is completed and scores are generated a matrix is then used to determine the appropriate level of supervision . If the parole officer feels the level of supervision dictated by the score is inappropriate, be it too little or too much, the officer has the option to override the score.

THE MASSACHUSETTS STUDY

As mentioned earlier, researchers as well as the developers of devices used to aid in making parole decisions have warned that any predictive device that is used must be periodically tested to determine whether or not it retains validity, especially if the device being used was developed from a different population. The Risk/Needs Assessment Scale used in Massachusetts is based on a model developed in Wisconsin and has been used to aid in decisions regarding levels of supervision since March of 1982. As of yet an evaluation to determine the validity of this instrument has not been conducted. Given the warning by developers and researchers to periodically test such

instruments, the amount of time that has passed since the instruments inception and the investment of time and energy put into the instrument by the state of Massachusetts, it is important and appropriate that the instrument undergo a validation to insure it is working adequately with the parole population in Massachusetts.

Research Questions

In order to determine the validity of the Massachusetts Parole Board's Risk/Needs Assessment instrument as a predictive aid and to examine other variables which may be related to parole outcome the following four research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What is the relationship between a parolee's total risk/needs score and his/her actual parole outcome?
2. What is the relationship between a parolee's score on the individual risk/needs items and his/her actual parole outcome?
3. What is the relationship between a parolee's given supervision level and his/her actual parole outcome? and;
4. What other demographic and criminal history variables are significant predictors of parole outcome in the Massachusetts parole population?

Methodology

Four aspects of the methodology used in this study are detailed: the sampling method, the data collection, the analytical method, and measurement.

Sample.--The sample was randomly selected from the population of men and women who were released to parole supervision during the first six months of 1983 and for whom an initial risk/needs assessment was

completed. The Planning, Research and Program Development Unit of the Massachusetts Parole Board maintains files by region-district which contains copies of all risk/need forms submitted. From these files 596 initial risk/needs forms for cases that met the above mentioned criteria were removed. Then from this sampling frame a systematic random sample of 198 cases was selected.

Data Collection.--Since the purpose of the study is to test the validity of the Risk/Need Assessment Instrument, most of the data used was taken directly from the risk/needs assessment forms. However, because past studies such as the ones mentioned earlier indicate that there are other variables that can influence parole outcome, certain demographic and criminal history variables which do not appear on the Risk/Needs Assessment form were analyzed to determine whether or not there is any relationship between those variables and an individual's parole outcome. Thus, data were collected in the following four areas:

1. Risk/Needs Scores and Supervision Level
2. Demographic Characteristics of Parolees
3. Criminal History
4. Parole Outcome

Analytical Method.--To address the research questions, the independent variable (in this case risk/needs scores, criminal history, and demographic variables) and the dependent variable (parole outcome) were cross-tabulated. The chi square statistic is then used to test the statistical significance of the relationship between the

independent variables and the dependent variable. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients are also computed to determine the relationship between all risk/needs items and parole outcome. The use of these statistics permits the identification of those variables which are statistically related to parole outcome and also gives an idea of which items by themselves are most effective in predicting parole outcome.

Measurement.--For the purposes of this study parole outcome was operationally defined as follows:

Sucessful Outcome;
- No new arrest for a non-trivial offense
- No revocation of parole

Unsuccessful Outcome or Parole Failure;
- A new arrest for a non-trivial offense
- Revocation of parole

The data collection period for this study ended in December of 1984. So in effect the defined parole outcome is based on an 18 to 24 month follow-up period. Thus, "successful" parolees are those who have neither parole revocations nor new arrests for non-trivial offenses for a period of at least 18 months following release from a correctional facility.

Qualitative Data.--During the course of the study five parole officers and a parole supervisor were interviewed to determine how the risk/needs assessments are actually conducted. These interviews provided very interesting information some of which illustrates the problems that face parole officers when they try to accurately complete the assessment form. A brief summary of each of the six

interviews appears near the end of this study and, where relevant, comments made during the interviews are used in discussing the findings.

Expectations.--In sections one and three of the findings which looked at total risk/needs scores it was expected that an increase in risk/needs score would be accompanied by an increase in the rate of parole failure.

In sections two and four, which examined the relationship between risk/needs items and parole outcome, it was expected that each risk item (except the last item, conviction for assaultive offense) would be significantly related to parole outcome. That is to say, when statistical tests are run, parolees who possess a certain risk characteristic should, as a group, be significantly more likely to fail while on parole than those parolees who do not possess the risk characteristic.

With respect to the needs items, it was expected that parolees who display a particular need area should be more likely, as a group, to fail while on parole than those parolee who do not display that particular need. It was not expected that each needs item would necessarily have a strong statistical relationship with parole outcome because the items were included on the assessment because it was thought by the developers of the model instrument that these items best represent the needs that face most parolees.

Section five examines the relationship between each of the risk/needs items and parole outcome. This analysis was incorporated to determine importance of each individual item on the Massachusetts

scale in relation to all other items used to predict parole outcome. Ideally each risk/needs item should be highly correlated with parole outcome and at the same time display a relatively low correlation with the other items, thus maximizing the item's explanatory power in regards to parole outcome.

In section six it was expected that the rate of parole failure would increase as the level of supervision increased. If the instrument is working properly, then it should be able to distinguish between parolees who pose a maximum risk of parole failure and those who pose a moderate risk. Finally, the instrument should also be able to identify those parolees who pose the least or a minimum risk of parole failure. If such distinctions are successful then parolees can be assigned to an appropriate level of supervision. Additionally, more time can be spent with those parolees who pose the greatest risk of failing on parole than with those who pose the least risk.

Finally, section seven examines demographic and criminal history items that do not appear on the risk/needs assessment. It also attempts to determine relationships between those variables and parole outcome. Some of the items examined in this section were not expected to be strongly related to parole outcome. Others were included because this writer suspected that as shown in many previous studies, these items may be significantly related to parole outcome.

Based on previous research findings a few of the specific hypotheused in this section which are expected to be supported include:

1. An increase in educational level will increase the likelihood of a successful parole outcome.
2. Parolees with a prior commitment will be more likely to fail on parole than those parolees without a prior commitment.
3. As the number of disciplinary reports received while incarcerated increases the rate of parole failures will increase.
4. Parolees who were first incarcerated before the age of twenty-two will fail on parole at a higher rate than those parolees who were over twenty-two when first incarcerated.

FINDINGS

To address the four research questions presented in this study the analysis is broken down into seven separate sections. Each section provides a table and discussions which highlight the major points of interest presented in the tables. In order of appearance the seven sections are:

1. Total Risk Score and Parole Outcome;
2. Validation of risk assessment items;
3. Total needs score and parole outcome;
4. Validation of needs assessment items;
5. Pearson's correlation coeffecients;
6. Supervision level and parole outcome and;
7. Demographic and criminal history data and parole outcome.

Total Risk Score and Parole Outcome

For purposes of analysis, the risk scores were grouped according to supervision level in which parolees were classified. As Table 1

indicates, an increase in total risk score generally increases the probability of an unsuccessful parole outcome. Thus, those falling into the score range, 0-3, resulting in a minimum level of supervision, had an overall parole failure rate of 18 per cent; moderate (4-6), 27 per cent; maximum (7-15), 38 per cent. However, because the distribution of cases is so skewed in the direction of maximum supervision it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions, other than there is a general increase in the probability of parole failure as risk score increases; and that parole officers or the instrument itself tend to classify the bulk of parolees into the high risk or maximum supervision range.

The data in Table 1 show parole outcome by categorized total risk scores.

Table 1
PAROLE OUTCOME AND TOTAL RISK SCORE

Total Risk Score	n	Successes (%)	Failures (%)
Minimum (0-3)	11	82	18
Moderate (4-6)	22	73	27
Maximum (7+)	165	62	38
TOTAL	198	64	35

Risk Items and Parole Outcome

An important aspect of this study was to examine the relationship between parolees scores for each risk item and their actual parole

outcome. This assessment gives a reasonable indication of what risk items are the best predictors of parole outcome. Chi Square tests were conducted to determine whether the relationship between each risk item and parole outcome was statistically significant.

Table 2 reveals that, when tests of statistical significance were run to determine the relationship between each risk item and parole outcome, it was found that the relationship was significant for five of the eleven risk items. These items, in terms of their strength of association with parole outcome, are:

1. Conviction for an indicated offense;
2. Number of prior felony conviction;
3. Age at first conviction;
4. Number of address changes;
5. Number of prior periods of supervision.

Table 2 also shows that three of the remaining six risk items appear to be fairly good indicators of parole outcome; yet, they could not be considered statistically significant. These items are: number of months employed prior to commitment, attitude, and number of prior revocations. Surprisingly, two items prior alcohol use problem and prior drug use problems, were found to have little statistical relationship with parole outcome. As expected, the risk item, conviction for an assaultive offense, was found to have no relationship with parole outcome, but interestingly Table 2 indicates parolees possessing this characteristic were somewhat more likely to be successful rather than unsuccessful while on parole.

TABLE 2 APPLICATION OF RISK ITEMS
TO PAROLE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES
(PERCENTAGES)

RISK ITEM	N	(%) PAROLE SUCCESSES	(%) PAROLE FAILURES	SIGNIFICANCE
Address Changes				
None	107	72	28	CHI SQUARE SIG.
One or More	91	55	45	at .019
Prior Employment				
Six Months or More	86	72	28	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Less Than Six Months	112	58	42	at .058
Prior Alcohol Problems				
No Interference	82	65	35	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Interference	116	64	36	at 1.000
Prior Drug Problems				
No Interference	77	69	31	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Interference	121	61	39	at .344
Attitude				
Motivated to change	153	68	32	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Dependent, Unwilling	45	51	49	at .058
Age at First Conviction				
24 or older	32	84	16	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Under 24	166	60	40	at .016
Prior Supervision				
None	39	79	21	CHI SQUARE SIG.
One or More	159	60	40	at .041
Prior Revocation				
None	103	71	29	CHI SQUARE SIG.
One or More	95	57	43	at .056
Prior Felony Convictions				
None	43	84	16	CHI SQUARE SIG.
One or More	155	58	42	at .004
Prior Conviction For Indicated Offense *				
No	44	85	15	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Yes	154	58	42	at .003
Conviction For Assaultive Offense				
No	66	63	27	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Yes	132	64	26	at 1.000

* Indicated offenses include burglary, theft, auto theft, robbery, worthless checks, and forgery.

The absence of a relationship between parole outcome and alcohol/drug problems resembles the results reported by Wright and Associates (1984) on probation clients in New York State. Still, the finding is surprising in many respects, and this result was discussed in interviews with parole officers who admitted that on some items they do not always have adequate information on which to base their scoring. If an officer has not had previous contact with the client, information in the parolee's folder is incomplete, or if the parolee is not honest in initial screening interviews, scoring comes to be a matter of guessing. Substance abuse, in particular, is a problem that parolees attempt to hide, according to parole officers, which might explain why these items fall far short of achieving statistical significance.

The Relationship of Total Needs Score to Parole Outcome

It was expected that as the total needs score increased the rate of parole failure would also increase. That expectation was somewhat supported in this analysis. Parolees who scored 0-3, (minimum needs) had a parole failure rate of 18 percent. This rate increased to 39 percent amoung parolees who scored from 4-7 (moderate needs). However, parolees who scored more than 7 on the total needs score, (maximum needs), had almost the same parole failure rate of 40 percent as those considered in the moderate needs category. Caution should be taken when interpreting these results because of the small sub-sample sizes.

Table 3
PAROLE OUTCOME AND TOTAL NEEDS SCORE

Total Needs Score	n	Successes %	Failures %
Minimum (0-3)	38	82	18
Moderate (4-7)	66	61	39
Maximum (8+)	49	60	40
TOTAL	198	65	35

Table 3 reveals that the total needs score does give a good indication of those parolees who would be successful on parole and who therefore, should have been considered for mininum supervision. The total needs score does not, however, differentiate the probability of success for parolees who score into the moderate and maximum needs supervision levels. Both groups had failure rates which were almost identical, 39 and 40 percent respectively. It was assumed that the total needs score as determined by the expected rate of parole failure would more accurately distinguish those in moderate level of supervision from those in the maximum level of supervision.

Validation of Needs Assessment Items

Another objective of this study was to determine the relationship between parolees' scores on each needs item and their actual parole outcome. This will give a good indication of what needs items are the best predictors of parole outcome. As mentioned earlier the developers of the needs assessment included the nine needs items because they had felt these items best represented the problems that face newly

released parolees and not necessarily because of the items statistical relationship with parole outcome. Nevertheless, chi square tests were conducted to determine if any of the needs items were in fact significantly related to parole outcome.

To conduct this analysis the values or scores for each needs items were dichotomized to two scores which indicate whether or not a certain needs item presented a problem to the parolees. For example, one of the items used on the needs assessment is scored as follows:

Alcohol Usage ..... 0 No Interference with functioning
1 Some Interference with functioning
3 Serious Interference with functioning

For purposes of this analysis all needs items were dichotomized as follows:

Alcohol Usage ..... 0 No Problem (No Interference)
1 Problem (Some/Serious Interference)

Table 4 shows that out of the nine needs items, six achieved statistical significance at the .05 level or beyond: (1) employment; (2) marital/family stability; (3) companions; and (4) emotional stability; (5) drug use problem; and (6) parole officer's impression of need. Employment, that is, whether or not the parolee has job training, bears a strong relationship to parole outcome. Data on the parole officer's impression of needs give credence to strong sense of "intuition" that officers insist is an important dimension of their judgments and decision-making. The high level of significance here seems to bear this out, as it did in the earlier study in New York by Wright and Associates (1984). Health, on the other hand, seems not to be a factor in parole failures; in fact, parole successes were more likely than failures to have a health problem.

TABLE 4. APPLICATION OF NEED ITEMS
TO PAROLE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES
(PERCENTAGES)

NEED ITEM	N	(%) PAROLE SUCCESSES	(%) PAROLE FAILURES	SIGNIFICANCE
Academic/Vocational Skills				
Adequate	64	73	27	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Minimal, None	134	60	40	at .084
Employment				
Has Job/Training	103	83	17	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Needs Job/Training or Unemployable	95	57	43	at .005
Marital/Family Relationship				
Stable/Relatively Stable	165	68	32	CHI SQUARE SIG.
UnStable	33	45	55	at .024
Companions				
Positive Relationships	81	74	26	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Negative Relationships	117	57	43	at .023
Emotional Stability				
Stable, Somewhat Stable	185	69	31	CHI SQUARE SIG.
UnStable	13	31	69	at .021
Alcohol Usage Problem				
No Interference	102	63	37	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Interference	96	67	33	at .784
Other Drug Usage Problem				
No Interference	108	72	28	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Interference	90	54	46	at .014
Health				
Sound Physical Health	166	63	37	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Health Interferes w/ functioning	32	72	28	at .427
PO's Impression of Needs *				
Low	17	94	6	CHI SQUARE SIG.
Moderate/High	181	61	39	at .015

* P.O.'s Impression of needs was Dichotomized to Low Needs and Moderate/High Needs.

Pearson's Correlation Coefficients

Even when chi square values for particular risk needs items demonstrate a relationship to parole outcome, caution should be exercised until other statistical tests are conducted. For example, an item having a strong relationship to parole outcome may be simultaneously highly correlated to other items being used to predict the same outcome. Thus, a parolee who has had prior parole revocation would also have prior convictions, as well as prior supervision. The explanatory power of the parole revocation item should be greater than those of the other two items when the items are considered separately, since parole revocation includes by definition prior convictions and prior supervision. At least one study, (Fischer, 1984) suggests that the predictive value of risk/needs instruments may be higher for those where items are not strongly interrelated. Thus, Fischer reports that the "salient factor score" and the "Rand 7 factor scale," each with only 7 items, predict almost as well as those with ten or more items, such as the Wisconsin, Iowa and Michigan Risk/Needs instruments.

To determine the importance of each individual item on the Massachusetts scale in relation to all of the other items used in predicting parole outcome Pearson's Correlation Coefficients were used. Tables 5 and 6 show the correlation matrix of the ten risk and nine needs items with parole outcome for the entire sample.

Table 5 reveals that "address changes," "age of first conviction," "prior felony conviction," and "conviction for indicated offense" all have moderate correlations with parole failure, the strongest being "prior felony conviction." However, the correlation matrix also shows

that this variable is relatively strong in its correlation to "indicated offense" , "age at first conviction," "prior revocation," and "prior conviction" The three items with the weakest correlation to parole failure are "prior alcohol problem," "prior drug problem," and as expected "conviction for assaultive offense," also failed to achieve statistical significance in the earlier chi square analyses.

Ideally, to achieve maximum explanatory power, the risk items should correlate strongly with the dependent variable (parole failure), and simultaneously have low correlations with other risk items. Again, in Table 5, only "number of address changes" approaches this ideal. It has a .176 correlation with parole failure and weak relationships with the other items, except for a .236 correlation to the employment item.

On the whole, the risk matrix reveals that only one item comes close to maximizing explanatory power in relation to parole failure by itself. The remaining items are either highly interrelated or have weak relationships to parole failure.

As for needs items (Table 6), six of the nine show moderate correlations with parole failure (employment, drug problem, parole officer's impression of needs, emotional stability, family/marital relationships, and companions). Each item also achieved statistical significance in the chi square analyses. Strongest of the correlations to parole outcome is "employment" (.209), which makes intuitive sense inasmuch as a parolee's job training or skills would seem to place him or her at an obvious

TABLE 5: CORRELATION MATRIX
RISK ITEMS AND PAROLE FAILURE
FOR THE 1983 MASSACHUSETTS SAMPLE

RISK ITEM	ADDRESS CHANGES	EMPLOY-MENT	ALCOHOL PROBLEM	DRUG PROBLEM	ATTI-TUDE	AGE AT FIRST CONVIC	PRIOR SUPER VISION	PRIO REVO-CATION	PRIOR CONVIC-TION	INDIC ATED OFFENSE
ADDRESS CHANGES	1.000									
EMPLOY-MENT	.236	1.000								
ALCOHOL PROBLEM	.138	.091	1.000							
DRUG PROBLEM	.133	.074	.171	1.000						
ATTITUDE	.032	.038	.089	.062	1.000					
AGE AT FIRST CONVIC-TION	.102	.141	.077	.156	.107	1.000				
PRIOR SUPER-VISION	.024	.207	.202	.157	.147	.369	1.000			
PRIOR REVO-CATION	.169	.189	.151	.248	.227	.256	.424	1.000		
PRIOR CONVIC-TION	.030	.132	.140	.183	.110	.334	.570	.160	1.000	
INDICAT-ED OFFENSE	.005	.120	.117	.047	.231	.359	.468	.246	.455	1.000
PAROLE FAILURE	.176	.145	.009	.078	.147	.185	.158	.146	.215	.197

TABLE 6: CORRELATION MATRIX
NEEDS ITEMS AND PAROLE FAILURE
1983 MASSACHUSETTS SAMPLE

NEED ITEM	ACADEMIC VOCATIONAL SKILLS	EMPLOY MENT	MARITAL FAMILY RELATIONS	COMPAN- IONS	EMOTIONAL STABILITY	ALCOHOL PROBLEM	DRUG PROBLEM	HEALTH PROBLEM	PO'S IMPRESSION OF NEEDS
ACADEMIC VOCATIONAL SKILLS	1.000								
EMPLOYMENT	.361	1.000							
MARITAL FAMILY RELATIONS	.193	.221	1.000						
COMPANIONS	.263	.244	.207	1.000					
EMOTIONAL STABILITY	.183	.235	.155	.096	1.000				
ALCOHOL PROBLEM	.089	.120	.126	.232	.110	1.000			
DRUG PROBLEM	.132	.118	.191	.326	.004	.332	1.000		
HEALTH PROBLEM	.215	.320	.135	.142	.327	.068	.067	1.000	
P.O.'S IMPRESSION OF NEEDS	.212	.258	.137	.222	.081	.189	.244	.135	1.000
PAROLE FAILURE	1.34	.209	.174	.172	.184	-.030	.185	-.071	.192

advantage over one with no training whatsoever.

Interestingly, the needs matrix also shows that either there is a moderate correlation between each need item and parole failure or the correlation to parole failure is relatively weak, as in the cases of "alcohol problem" and "health." Both items failed in the earlier chi square analyses to achieve statistical significance. And, in the case of these two items, both showing a negative correlation to parole failure, parolees with either alcohol or health problems seem to have a better chance of having a successful rather than an unsuccessful parole outcome.

As for explanatory power, similar to the risk matrix, employment stands out as having the strongest correlation to parole failure. However, it also has a relatively strong correlation with five of the other needs items. Thus, in this instance, the chi square value for employment achieved statistical significance; yet, when the other needs items are taken into consideration,the item appears to lose much of its predictive capability. Only "emotional stability" with a .184 correlation to parole failure and with moderate correlations to other items "health" and "companions", comes close to maximizing its explanatory power. The balance of the items with positive correlations to parole failure have even higher correlations with at least four or more of the other needs items.

The Relationship of Supervision Level and Parole Outcome

An examination of data on supervision level in relations to parole outcome is especially instructive about how parolees tend to be rated on the Massachusetts Risk/Needs Assessment Scale.

The data in Table 7 show parole outcome by supervision level.

Table 7
PAROLE OUTCOME BY LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

Level of Supervision	Percent of Total Cases	Successes %	Failures %
Maximum (n= 179)	90	64	36
Moderate (n=14)	7	64	36
Mininum (n=5)	3	80	20

Chi Square Sig. at .754 Level

That nine of every ten parolees achieve risk/needs scores that place them in the maximum supervision classification suggests, at the one extreme, that officers perceive repeat offenses or technical parole violation as a "sure thing"; or, at the other extreme, they deeply mistrust the instrument to discriminate between maximum, moderate and minimum risk parolees, thus rate virtually all parolees in such a way as to assure intense supervision. Although there is no denying that parole officers command a knowledge about their clients that permits intimate judgments about their probability of parole failure, this distribution is so skewed in the direction of "maximum" as to give credence to the latter explanation. In fact, comments from interviews with parole officers underscore their misgivings about the use of screening instruments, as well as mistrust of statistics in making policy decisions about parole operations. For example:

Interview 1. This officer feels that the risk/needs is not worthwhile, since some clients will have low risk scores, when in fact they are high risks for parole failure. Even those with stable work histories and no substance abuse problems could easily be involved with organized crime.

Interview 2. While risk/needs may be theoretically sound, it some times does not work well on the practical end.

Interview 3. This officer saw risk/needs screening as a "tool" that furnished information that was NOT in fact "cut and dried." "Like all statistics, the scores can be manipulated." His favorable comment about risk/needs: "It takes the pressure off me to make a decision...the assessment can be blamed for any misplaced clients."

Interview 4. This officer was perhaps the most unique in his commentary, in that he felt risk/needs screening was unnecessary. It provided him with "...information I already have." Furthermore, "It's like doing my job twice!"

This officer also classified ALL parolees into maximum supervision so that he could get to know them better.

Interview 5. According to this officer, all parolees should be classified into maximum levels of supervision for at least a year regardless of their scores.

Interview 6. A parole supervisor raises the point that an officer's judgment about clients is often clouded by a lack of information in their records, thus implying that uncertainties produce errors in the direction of maximum supervision classification.

Thus, while data in Table 7 illustrate the instrument's general capability of differentiating between successful and unsuccessful parole outcomes with respect to minimum and moderate (but not moderate and maximum, which have identical success/failure percentages), the central purpose of a risk/needs instrument is undermined if virtually all parolees are relegated to maximum supervision classifications.

Demographic and Criminal History Items and Parole Outcome

Earlier in this paper, many previous studies regarding the use of prediction in parole decisions were reviewed. Included in this review were examinations of some of the classification instruments used in other states to aid in parole related decisions. These research outcomes led to extending this validation study to include an examination of the relationship between parole outcome and some other demographic and criminal history items that do not appear on the

Massachusetts Risk/Needs Assessment.

It was expected that many of these items would be significantly related to parole outcome inasmuch as they were found to be significantly related to parole outcome in previous studies. Thus, in addition to the Risk/Needs items, data was also collected for the following items:

1) Time served before parole
2) Gender
3) Veterans Status
4) Institutional security from which paroled
5) Governing offense
6) Marital Status
7) Educational Level
8) Race
9) Number of Prior Adult Commitments
10) Number of Disciplinary Reports received while incarcerated
11) Age at first commitment

To examine the relationship between these items and parole outcome a number of tables were constructed to display the distribution of this data. Table 8 depicts the data on parole outcome and time served.

It was assumed that parolees who served the most time before being released would have a more difficult time adjusting while on parole than those serving shorter sentences, and therefore, have a higher rate of parole failure. Table 8 reveals however, that this was

Table 8
PAROLE OUTCOME BY TIME SERVED

Time Served (in months)	Successes %	Failures %
2-6 (n=19)	53	47
7-12 (n=52)	67	33
13-18 (n=38)	66	34
19-24 (n=33)	61	39
24+ (n=53)	65	35
TOTAL(n=195)	64	36

Chi Square Sig. at .825 Level

not the case. Parolees who served the shortest time in prison, 2-6 months, were found to also have the highest rate of parole failure, while the failure rate remained fairly consistent among the remaining four subgroups.

Table 9 shows the parole outcome data by the gender of the parolees. Although gender was not found to be significantly related to parole outcome it was interesting to find that the females selected for this study had a parole failure rate of exactly 50 percent. By contrast males failed on parole at a lower rate of 34 percent. Table 9 depicts this information.

Table 9
PAROLE OUTCOME BY GENDER

Gender	Successes %	Failures %
Male (n=180)	66	34
Female (n=18)	50	50
TOTAL(n=198)	64	35

Chi Square Sig. at .291 Level

Table 10 shows parole outcome by veterans status. This table reveals that veteran's status is not significantly related to parole outcome. However the table does show that non-veterans had a higher parole failure rate (38%) than veterans, only 27 percent of whom failed on parole.

Table 10
PAROLE OUTCOME BY VETERAN'S STATUS

Veteran's Status	Successes %	Failures %
Veteran (n=33)	73	27
Non-Veteran (n=153)	62	38
TOTAL (n=186)	64	36

Chi Square Sig. at .339 Level

Table 11 gives a breakdown of parole outcome by the type of institution from which parolees were released. This analysis revealed that type of institution from which the inmate is paroled was significantly related to parole outcome. The assumption in this analysis was that parolees released from pre-release and county

facilities would have higher rates of parole success than those parolees released from the more confining state institutions.

The data in Table 11 show that this is the case. Parolees released from state institutions had the lowest success rates (50%) while the success rates for parolees released from pre-release (67%) and county (76%) were significantly higher.

Table 11
PAROLE OUTCOME BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION FROM WHICH RELEASED

Institution Type	Successes %	Failures %
State (n=60)	50	50
County (n=41)	76	24
Pre-Release (n=95)	67	33
TOTAL (n=196)	64	36

Chi Square Sig. at .018 Level

Table 12 shows parole outcome by governing offense. For this analysis, governing offenses were broken down into four categories which include violent, property, drug related, and rape offenses. It was assumed that parolees confined for property crimes and drug related offenses would have the highest parole failure rates. This assumption was supported in part by the fact that the parole failure rate was the highest (43%) for parolees who were confined for property crimes. However, the assumption was not fully supported because parolees confined for drug related offenses had a lower parole failure rate (26%) than those parolees confined for crimes of a violent nature (rape included) who failed at a rate of 36 percent. Although the

cases were limited, it was interesting to find that parolees who were confined for rape related charges were more likely to have a successful parole outcome (71%) than those parolees confined for other types of violent offenses (63%).

Table 12
Parole Outcome by Governing Offense

Offense	Successes %	Failures %
Violent (n=95)	63	37
Property (n=53)	57	43
Drug Related (n=31)	74	26
Rape (n=14)	71	29
TOTAL (n=193)	64	36

Chi Square Sig. at .465 Level

Table 13 reports parole outcome by marital status. The assumption in this analysis was that parolees who were identified as being married at the time of their release would have more of a support mechanism during their parole than those parolees who were not married and should therefore be more likely to have a successful parole. Table 13 shows support for this assumption in that parolees who were married had the highest parole success rate (74%) of the five marital status categories. Single parolees had an overall parole success rate of 63 percent compared to a slightly lower success rate of 59 percent for divorced parolees.

Table 13
PAROLE OUTCOME BY MARITAL STATUS

Marital Status	Successes %	Failures %
Married (n=35)	74	26
Single (n=121)	63	37
Divorced (n=27)	59	41
Separated (n=11)	67	33
Widowed (n= 3)	33	67
TOTAL (n=197)	64	36

Chi Square Sig. at .530 Level

Table 14 depicts the data on Parole Outcome by Educational Level. It was expected that the probability of having a successful parole would increase as the level of education for parolees increased. In this case the expectation was realized as it was found that a parolees level of education was significantly related to his/her parole outcome. According to the data in Table 14 parolees with at least some college had a successful parole rate of 89 percent while those parolees with less than a high school education were successful on parole only 57 percent of the time.

Another assumption regarding educational level was that parolees who completed twelve years of formal education displayed a higher degree of stability at some point in their lives than those who obtained a GED (high school equivalency) and thus would be more likely to have a successful parole. This assumption was also supported in that 77 percent of parolees with twelve years of formal education were

successful on parole while only 64 percent of parolees who obtained a GED were successful.

Finally, Table 14 reveals a steady increase in the percentage of successful paroles as the level of education increases and unfortunately that more than three-fourths of the individuals selected for this study had less than a formal high school education.

Table 14
PAROLE OUTCOME BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Educational Level		Successes %	Failures %
Some College (At least)	(n=18)	89	11
Twelve years formal education	(n=30)	77	23
GED (high school equivalency)	(n=52)	64	36
Less than twelve years	(n=95)	57	43
TOTAL	(n=195)	65	35

Chi Square Sig. at .028 Level

Table 15 shows the distribution of data regarding parole outcome and race. It was assumed that a parolee's race would be unrelated to his/her actual parole outcome. However, as Table 15 depicts, for this sample race was significantly related to parole outcome. That is to say, parolees who were white had successful paroles at a rate of 69 percent, while those who were black or hispanic had successful paroles at a rate of only 51 percent.

Table 15
PAROLE OUTCOME BY RACE

Race	Successes %	Failures %
White (n=143)	69	31
Non-White (n=55) (Black or Hispanic)	51	49
Total	64	36

Chi Square Sig. at .025

When educational level was taken into consideration the analysis revealed that race was again related to parole outcome, but the relationship was not statistically significant. The findings show that parolees who were white and had less than twelve years formal education were successful on parole at a rate of 65 percent, the success rate dropped sharply to 43 percent for non-white parolees with less than twelve years of formal education. Table 15b shows the distribution of parole successes by race by educational level.

Table 15b
PAROLE SUCCESSES BY RACE BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Educational Level	Successes White % (n)	Non-White % (n)
Less than high school	66 (56)	43 (37)
G.E.D.	64 (44)	63 (8)
Formal high school	74 (27)	100 (3)
Some college	100 (12)	67 (6)

The overall findings regarding the relationship between race and parole outcome suggest that non-whites with less than twelve years of formal education, have a much higher probability for parole failure than whites. Knowing this, it might not be a bad idea to give this group more attention in terms of the services they could be offered in order to increase the probability that they, too, may have a better chance of having a successful parole period.

Table 16 shows a tabulation of parole outcome by Number of Prior Adult Commitments. This item appears on the risk assessment used by the state of Ohio's Parole Board and was found in a validation study (Kratcoski, 1982) to be significantly related to parole outcome. Therefore, the expectation was that this item would prove to be strongly related to parole outcome in Massachusetts.

Table 16
PAROLE OUTCOME BY NUMBER OF PRIOR ADULT COMMITMENTS

Prior Commitments	Successes %	Failures %
None (n=83)	75	25
One or More (n=114)	56	44
TOTAL (n=197)	64	36

Chi Square Sig. at .013 level

Table 16 shows that the Number of Prior Adult Commitments was significantly related to parole outcome for this sample of parolees. Interestingly, this item was found to be a better indicator of parole outcome than eight of the ten risk items used to assess parolees in

Massachusetts. The only two items on the Massachusetts Risk Assessment that proved to be more effective indicators of parole outcome than this item were "Number of Prior Felony Conviction" and "Prior Conviction for an Indicated Offense". It may be feasible to consider this item as a replacement for one of the items used on the Massachusetts Assessment which was not found to be significantly related to parole outcome in this study.

Brown (1978) suggested that the evidence of disciplinary reports received while incarcerated could possibly be related to parole outcome. He felt that this item takes into account recent personal attributes or development of an offender that could affect his/her post release outcome and should be considered when attempting to determine risk.

Table 17 shows support for this suggestion in that the chi square value for this item approaches statistical significance. The parole success rate for those parolees who had more than two disciplinary reports while incarcerated was 57 percent for this sample while the success rate for those who had two or less disciplinary reports increased substantially to 70 percent. This is another item that could be considered for inclusion on the Massachusetts Risk Assessment. (See Table 17)

Table 17
PAROLE OUTCOME BY NUMBER OF DISCIPLINARY REPORTS

"D" Reports	Successes %	Failures %
Two or less (n=108)	70	30
More than two (n=90)	57	43
TOTAL(n=198)	64	36

Chi Square Sig. at .064 Level

Table 18 shows the distribution of data regarding parole outcome and age at first adult commitment. The assumption in this analysis was that parolees who were first incarcerated at the age of twenty-one or younger would be less successful on parole than those first incarcerated after the age of twenty-one.

This assumption was supported in that the relationship between parole outcome and age at first incarceration was statistically significant.

Further, parolees who were over twenty-one when first incarcerated had a successful parole rate of 78 percent compared to the substantially lower success rate of 55 percent for parolees who were ~~over~~ twenty-one or under when first incarcerated.

Table 18
PAROLE OUTCOME BY AGE AT FIRST COMMITMENT

Age at First Commitment	Successes %	Failures %
21 or younger (n=113)	55	45
Over 21 (n=81)	78	22
TOTAL (n=194)	64	36

Chi Square Sig. at .014 Level

PAROLE OFFICERS AND THE RISK/NEEDS ASSESSMENT

During the course of this study five parole officers and one parole supervisor were interviewed in regards to the use of the

initial risk/needs assessment. In general, these interviews revealed that parole officers believed that the assessment had both good and bad aspects. A summary of each of these interviews follows.

Interview One

Parole Officer (P.O.) did not feel the risk/needs assessment was worthwhile because some clients came up with low risk scores even if in reality they were not. The P.O. said that some clients who had good or stable working histories with no substance abuse could easily be involved in organized crime and therefore should be watched more intensely than their scores indicated. The P.O. also implied that making out the R/N's assessment was sometimes done with "guess work" because of the lack of access to information necessary to properly fill out the assessment.

Interview Two

Parole Officer stated the R/N assessment had both good and bad points. He said it offered an efficient and objective way of clarifying the risk and needs of clients compared to past methods, which involved a memo written for each client based only on the knowledge possessed by the P.O. He also claimed that the risk/needs helped to terminate clients more efficiently. That is, if a parolee handles minimum supervision with no problem for a year, he/she is entitled to be discharged from supervision.

The bad aspect of the R/N mentioned by this P.O. was that although the system is theoretically sound, it sometimes does not work well on the practical end. That is, "most parole officers don't get involved with making out another assessment if a change or problem occurs for a

parolee while under supervision". He felt the "inconvenience of making out another R/N assessment for such reasons reduced the system's practicality".

Interview Three

P.O. felt the R/N assessment was a "tool" that furnished information that was not" cut and dried" and claimed, like all statistics, the scores could be manipulated. P.O. also believed that the R/N assessment was useful as a double check on clients. He said that the risk/needs assessment took the pressure off him to make a decision, claiming the assessment can be blamed for misplaced clients. This P.O. claimed to have no problem with the instrument.

Interview Four

This P.O. was perhaps the most unique of those interviewed. He said that the R/N assessment was unnecessary since it did not seem to provide him with very much information that he did not already know. He felt he wad doing his job twice (reassessment) since he keeps track of his clients with running records.

This P.O. said that regardless of the score of the R/N he classified "all" new parolees to maximum supervision to get to know them better. He said "Some guys can get lost or in trouble if misclassified and because some paroles are so short (6 months to a year) he may only get to see them once or twice or maybe not even at all. He felt that the risk/needs was part of his job that took time and the reassessment was easy to overlook because it was so hard to keep track of all his clients. He also claimed the assessment could provide some insight about a parolee if the P.O. does not know

anything about him, but that the information offered was limited. He said he would like to see the Institutional Parole Officer get more involved with making out the assessment because some times he didn't have access to the information that is necessary to make it out properly. He said he sometimes had to depend on the parolee himself to provide information which he feels may not be as accurate as he would like. He also believed that some of the questions on the R/N were not relevant for each case. Finally he claimed that P.O's who were working before the R/N was adopted felt that it was unnecessary paperwork that didn't really have to be done.

Interview Five

Like the preceding parole officer, this officer, also believed that all state parolees should be classified into maximum level of supervision for at least a year regardless of their scores. He placed those being paroled from a county institution on maximum supervision for at least six months. This action he claims, gives him the opportunity to get to know his clients much better than if they were placed on moderate or minimum supervision which he felt did not require enough contacts to adequately supervise any parolee being released from a correctional facility. He also stated that some parole officers will use the instruments scores if they have a big caseload only because that way they do not have to see as many parolees and the instrument will be responsible for any parolees who are misclassified. This Parole Officer was asked what he thought might account for the seemingly inconsistent scoring for drug and alcohol abuse items on the risk and needs assessment. Whether a parolee has presently or has

previously had an alcohol or drug abuse problem appears on both the initial risk assessment and the initial needs assessment. However, when examining the data an apparent inconsistency was revealed. That is, in regard to alcohol abuse, 82 parolees received scores indicating that alcohol did not interfere with their funtioning on the risk scale and 116 parolees received scores indicating that alcohol did interfere with their functioning. On the other hand, when needs were considered, 102 parolees received scores indicating no interference in functioning related to alcohol, while 96 received scores indicating alcohol did interfere with functioning. Similar findings were also shown in regard to drug interference on both the risk and needs assessments. On the risk assessment 77 parolees had scores indicating no past interference related to drug usage, while 121 parolees received scores implying that drugs did interfere with their functioning. However, when the needs were considered, 108 parolees received scores indicating there was no interference related to drug use and 90 received scores indicating that drugs interfered with their functioning.

Table 19 shows the distribution of scores related to alcohol and drug abuse problems and also illustrates what seemed to be an inconsistency in scoring for those items.

Table 19
Distribution of Drug and Alcohol Scores

	RISK ITEM		NEEDS ITEM	
	No Interference	Interference	No interference	Interference
Alcohol	82	116	102	96
Drug	77	121	108	90

As Table 19 shows there seems to be inconsistency in scoring on the risk and needs assessment as far as alcohol and drug abuse problems are concerned. When a parole officer was asked what he felt might account for this, his response was that the risk items were directed towards prior problems with alcohol and drugs while the needs items were related to present problems. Although this explanation seemed to clarify the issue to a certain extent, it was still felt that the differences in scoring for these items is either an inconsistency on the part of those completing the assessment or something else that was not considered.

Interview Six

This interview was conducted with a parole supervisor and was related to how the risk/needs assessments are conducted. Some of the items on the risk/needs assessment are obviously objective in nature, that is, the information needed to score the item can easily be found in a parolee's folder. For example, the item's "number of previous felony convictions" or "parole revocations", etc. are readily accessible by reviewing a parolee's folder. However, other items, such as "emotional stability", "family relationships", "alcohol or drug problems" are items that require somewhat of a subjective decision in order to score properly for the item. This is where it appeared to be a problem for the parole officers. When the parole supervisor was asked how a parole officer makes a decision in regards to the items needing a subjective decision, he related that scores for these items are determined from four differenct sources.

1. Some parole officers have come to know parolees and their families from having previous involvement with them. Therefore, they have an insight from past experience into their problems.

2. For items such as alcohol or drug problems, the supervision plan or conditions of parole assigned to a parolee by the parole board are used as a reference. An example of this suituation might be if the parole board give a condition of parole as liquor or drug abstinence, the parole officer could interpret this (whether it is true or not) as though the parolee has a serious substance abuse problem and score the item accordingly.

3. Another way in which parole officers are able to complete the risk/needs assessment is with information gained from an initial interview conducted with each parolee shortly after he/she is paroled. If the parole officer has any questions about a certain risk or need item, the parolee, through the course of the interview may unknowingly provide the needed information. Then, again, he may not. This leads to the fourth and final way parole officers complete the assessment.

4. Guess work. As mentioned in the previous interviews some of the parole officers felt they did not have access to all the information necessary to complete the assessment properly and sometimes had to rely on an educated guess. This presents all kinds of reliabiltiy problems, the most obvious being that some parolees are being over-classified or under classified based on very unreliable information.

The information obtained from these interviews seems to give a better understanding of why some risk and need items (such as alcohol

and drug abuse problems) that have been found to be significantly related to parole outcome in other studies (Pritchard, 1979; Wish et al, 1983; Kitchener et al, 1977) fail to significantly differentiate parolees in Massachusetts. As mentioned earlier in the interviews and supported by the findings of this study, parole officers just do not seem to have access to all the information necessary to reliably complete the risk/needs assessment and they tend to display a certain degree of skepticism regarding the use of the risk/needs assessment in making parole related decisions.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of data on the Massachusetts Risk/Needs Assessment instrument reveal a mixed picture in terms of its relationship to parole outcome. It also points out a potential problem in administering the instrument at the parole officer level.

First, when the individual risk and needs items were analyzed to determine their relationship to parole outcome, many items were found not to be significantly related to parole outcome. Of the twenty items included on both the risk and needs assessment, almost half (9) were found to have chi square values that were not statistically significant at the accepted .05 level. Those risk items which were found for this sample to be most significantly related to parole outcome were:

1. Number of Prior Felony Convictions
2. Prior Conviction for an Indicated Offense
3. Age at First Conviction

4. Number of Address Changes Prior to Incarceration

5. Number of Prior Periods of Supervision

On the needs assessment, items that show a statistically significant relationship to parole outcome included:

1. Employment

2. Marital or Family Relationship

3. Companions

4. Emotional Stability

5. Drug Usage Problem

6. Parole Officer's Impression of Needs

Those items having the weakest statistical relationship to parole outcome included on the risk assessment were "prior alcohol problem", and "conviction for assaultive offense" and on the needs assessment items "alcohol usage problem" and "health". Interestingly, of these five items found to be the least related to parole outcome, three items - "conviction for an assaultive offense" on the risk scale and "alcohol usage problems" and "health" on the needs scale revealed that having a score which indicated a problem increased the probability that the parolees would have a successful parole outcome. A finding such as this is a rude contradiction when the overall effectiveness of the Risk/Needs Assessment is considered. One function of the Risk/Needs Assessment is that each item used will contribute to the overall ability to differentiate those parolees who have a high probability of being successful from those who do not. As these findings reveal, the use of certain items seems to lessen the overall effectiveness of the instrument.

Another significant finding in this study was the relationship between total risk and needs score and parole outcome. Theoretically, if the instrument is working properly, an increase in total risk or need score would be related to an increase in parole failure. Although this was true in the case of the risk assessment, when the needs assessment was considered, an increase in parole failure was evident only for those parolees whose scores ranged from minimal to moderate. However, a total needs score indicating moderate and maximum needs had no relationship to an increase in probability of parole failure. In fact, parolees who had a total needs score of six or seven which placed them into the moderate needs level had a higher probability of having an unsuccessful parole than the majority of those parolees who scored into the maximum needs level.

By doing some exploratory research some demographic and criminal history items which were significantly related to parole outcome and not accounted for in the study of the risk/needs assessment were identified. These findings revealed that the type of institution (state, county, pre-release) that a parolee was released from was significantly related to parole outcome. Those parolees released from state institutions had the highest probability of having a parole failure. This finding makes sense in that one would expect the most serious or highest risk offenders to be incarcerated in the state institutions.

When educational level was considered it also was found to be significantly related to parole outcome. That is those parolees with less than twelve years of formal education (G.E.D.'s included) had a

much higher probability of failing on parole than those who graduated from high school or had at least some college education. Parolees who obtained at least a formal high school education appeared to display a degree of stability at some point in their lives that makes their chances of having a successful outcome much greater than those parolees who have not had at least twelve years of formal education.

Another demographic characteristic that was found to be significantly related to parole outcome was race. The findings show that being a minority (black or hispanic) increased dramatically the probabilty that a parolee would be unsuccessful while on parole. This finding was especially true if the minority member was male and had less than twelve years of formal education.

The items" number of prior adult commitments" as well as "age at first adult commitment" were also found to be significantly related to parole outcome, while the number of disciplinary reports received while incarcerated approached statistical significance in relation to parole outcome. These findings suggest that as persons have more involvement with the criminal justice system the probability of having an unsuccessful parole outcome increases substantially.

Perhaps the most relevant of all the findings revealed in this study was the number of parolees classified into the different levels of supervision. Of the 198 cases selected for this study, over 90 percent (179) were classified into a maximum supervision level. About 7 percent (14) were placed into moderate supervision and less than 3 percent (5) placed into minimum supervision level. Of those placed into moderate and maximum supervision level the parole failure rates

were virtually identical at 36%, while those placed on minimum supervision had a failure rate of 20%. (One out of the five had an unsuccessful parole).

This finding raises definite concern about the feasibility of using an instrument which fails to adequately classify a sufficient number of parolees into the different levels of supervision. For the amount of time and effort involved in conducting an initial risk and needs assessment one would expect a higher proportion of parolees to be classified into the three different levels of supervision. As it is now, the vast majority of parolees are classified into the maximum supervision level. This practice makes the use of an instrument to determine this seem unnecessary. Perhaps just assigning all parolees to a maximum level of supervision when they are first paroled would be more practical. This approach assures that no parolees are misclassified and, at the same time allows parole officers to gain a better understanding of each parolee before assigning him/her to a less intensive supervision level. It has been mentioned at the Parole Board's Central Office, that postponing the initial risk/needs assessment for three months or so will give parole officers a better chance to accumulate the knowledge necessary to properly conduct a risk/needs assessment on Massachusetts parolees. As mentioned earlier, the overriding motive for the use of predictive devices is the desire to optimize the allocation of resouces. That is to say, the instrument should be able to distinguish high risk parolees from moderate and low risks so that more time can be spent with parolees who appear to really need it and less with those posing only moderate

and minimal threat of risk. The findings revealed in this study suggest that the Massachusetts Risk/Needs Assessment does not in fact do this. Put another way, risk/needs screening ~~is~~ appears to have had almost no effect in redistributing case supervision by parole officers in Massachusetts, since previous to the implementation virtually all parolees were automatically assigned to maximum supervision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings revealed in this study have prompted the inclusion of recommendations section that could possibly improve the method by which parolees are classified into levels of supervision.

1. The first recommendation concerns the risk items "prior alcohol problems" and "prior drug problems". The results of this study indicate that these items may be two of the most difficult for parole officers to access (both were found in the study to be unrelated to parole outcome). However, many other studies have found these items to be strongly related to parole outcome. If it is true, as was reported in some of the interviews held with Parole Officers, that these items are often times scored from inadequate information or at times even by guesswork, then perhaps the criteria used to score these items should more explicitly defined. The National Institute of Corrections (1979) reports that some classification instruments define drug/alcohol involvement quite specifically (any arrest in the last two years for drug or alcohol abuse). This idea offers promise for the Massachusetts Risk/Needs Assessment in that the scoring for such

items would be more consistent and less subjective, thus making the information used in the assessment as a whole more reliable.

2. A second recommendation that is some ways related to the first would be to develop a risk assessment scale based solely on objective data. By doing this decision-makers would have a good indication of which parolees can be expected to succeed or fail on parole based strictly on objective data. Then parole officers could be given the option to override the statistical classification if it was felt necessary. If this approach were to be considered then items like prior alcohol/drug problems which were found in this study to be unrelated to parole outcome could be replaced with items such as "age at first commitment", "number of prior commitments", "number of disciplinary reports received while incarcerated" or "educational level" which were found in this study to be strongly related to parole outcome. This approach would also allow parole officers who feel a parolee has a serious drug or alcohol problem to automatically assign him/her to maximum supervision. The way the assessment is conducted now a parolee with either a serious drug or alcohol problem could theoretically be assigned to a level of supervision which may not appropriately consider his or her problem. Any parolee with a substance abuse problem should be automatically assigned maximum supervision to assure that their problem is addressed and also as a public safety consideration.

3. A third recommendation would involve a delay in conducting the initial risk/needs assessment. As this study has shown approximately 90 percent of the parolees selected for this sample were classified

into maximum supervision. Whether this practice is a reflection of the instrument itself in overclassifying parolees or that it is the parole officers impression that parole failure is a "sure thing" is not fully clear. However, as mentioned earlier, it may not be unwise to put off the initial assessment until the parolee has been on maximum supervision for a few months. This approach would allow the parole officers to become more familiar with each of the parolees and their circumstances and consequently put the parole officer in a better position to complete the assessment based on more accurate information than now is possible. This change would hardly be a major one since nine out of ten parolees selected for this study were assigned to maximum supervision anyway. And because the supervision requirements for maximum cases are only minimal anyway (one in-person contact a month) it would not seem to be asking too much to have all persons being paroled from correctional facilities to be seen as maximum cases until they can prove that less supervision would be more appropriate.

4. Another recommendation prompted by this study involves further research regarding the assessment instrument itself. Clearly, results indicate that the Massachusetts instrument requires re-evaluation of the items it includes as well as the number of items it uses. Some items appear to contribute little in the way of explanatory power to differentiate parole failures from successes.

It is this writer's belief that the modification of the instrument itself may be responsible for classifying a disproportionate number of parolees into maximum supervision. Since the instrument has been in use for three years now and had never been previously evaluated, more

intense research may reveal that the cut-off scores for determining supervision levels are set too low. It is possible that when researchers implemented the instrument cut-off scores were kept low as a safety consideration to insure that parolees would be overclassified rather than underclassified. However, using such low cut-off scores seems to undermine the feasibility of using a predictive aid. Further study may reveal that cut-off scores can be adjusted to insure a higher proportion of parolees are assigned to each of the three supervision levels without posing the threat of underclassifying parolees.

5. A final recommendation is that the department consider developing a program that could better train parole officers on the risk/needs screening approach, in particular, how officers can provide accurate data and judgments that will serve the ends of a more effective and efficient case management system.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE BOARD

Initial Risk Assessment

__/__/__
(Date)

Institution Number	Parolee Name Last First MI	
Release Date	Region/ District	Parole Officer Last Name

Select the appropriate answer and enter the number in the score column. Add all scores and write the sum in the space marked TOTAL RISK SCORE. Turn the page and complete the Needs Assessment Form.

			SCORE
Number of Address Changes in Last Year: (Prior to Commitment)	0	None	
	1	One or more	
Number of Months Employed in Last 12 Months: (Prior to commitment)	0	Six months or more	
	1	Less than six months	
	0	Not applicable	
Alcohol Usage Problems: (Prior to commitment)	0	No interference with functioning	
	1	Interference with functioning	
Other Drug Usage Problems: (Prior to commitment)	0	No interference with functioning	
	1	Interference with functioning	
Attitude:	0	Motivated to change; receptive to assistance	
	1	Dependent or unwilling to accept responsibility	
Age at First Conviction:	0	Twenty-four or older	
	1	Under twenty-four	
Number of Prior Periods of Probation/Parole Supervision: (Adult or Juvenile)	0	None	
	1	One or more	
Number of Prior Probation/Parole Revocations: (Adult or Juvenile)	0	None	
	1	One or more	
Number of Prior Felony Convictions: (or Juvenile Adjudications)	0	None	
	1	One or more	
Convictions or Juvenile Adjudications: (Select applicable and add for score. Do not exceed a total of 2. Include current offense.)	0	None	
	1	Burglary, theft, auto theft, or robbery	
	1	Worthless checks or forgery	
Convictions or Juvenile Adjudications for Assaultive Offenses Within Last Five Years: (An offense which involves the use of a weapon, physical force or the threat of force.)	0	None	
	5	Yes	

TOTAL RISK SCORE _____

MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE BOARD

Initial Needs Assessment

(Date)

Institution Number	Parolee Name Last	First	MI	
Release Date	Region/ District	Parole Officer Last Name		

Select the appropriate answer and enter the number in the score column. Add all scores and write the sum in the space marked TOTAL NEEDS SCORE. CHECK THE APPROPRIATE SUPERVISION LEVEL. For CMC cases, check the appropriate box; then, remove carbon paper, tear off last page and send to CENTRAL OFFICE RESEARCH. Place risk/needs forms in parolee's folder.

			SCORE
Academic/Vocational Skills	0	Adequate skills	
	1	Minimal skills	_____
	2	No skills	
Employment	0	Has job or training	
	1	Needs job or training	_____
	3	Unemployable	
Marital/Family Relationships	0	Stable	
	1	Relatively stable	_____
	2	Unstable	
Companions	0	Positive relationships	
	1	Some negative relationships	_____
	2	Many negative relationships	
Emotional Stability	0	Appears stable	
	1	Appears somewhat stable	_____
	3	Appears unstable	
Alcohol Usage	0	No interference with functioning	
	1	Some interference with functioning	_____
	3	Serious interference with functioning	
Other Drug Usage	0	No interference with functioning	
	1	Some interference with functioning	_____
	3	Serious interference with functioning	
Health	0	Sound physical health	
	1	Illness interferes somewhat with functioning	_____
	2	Illness interferes seriously with functioning	
Parole Officer's Impression of Needs	0	Low	
	1	Moderate	_____
	3	High	

TOTAL NEEDS SCORE _____

Level of Supervision (Check (✓) one):

☐ Maximum ☐ Moderate ☐ Minimum

☐ Yes ☐ No

MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE BOARD

Central Office Research
Initial Risk/Needs
Coding Sheet

___/___/___
(Date)

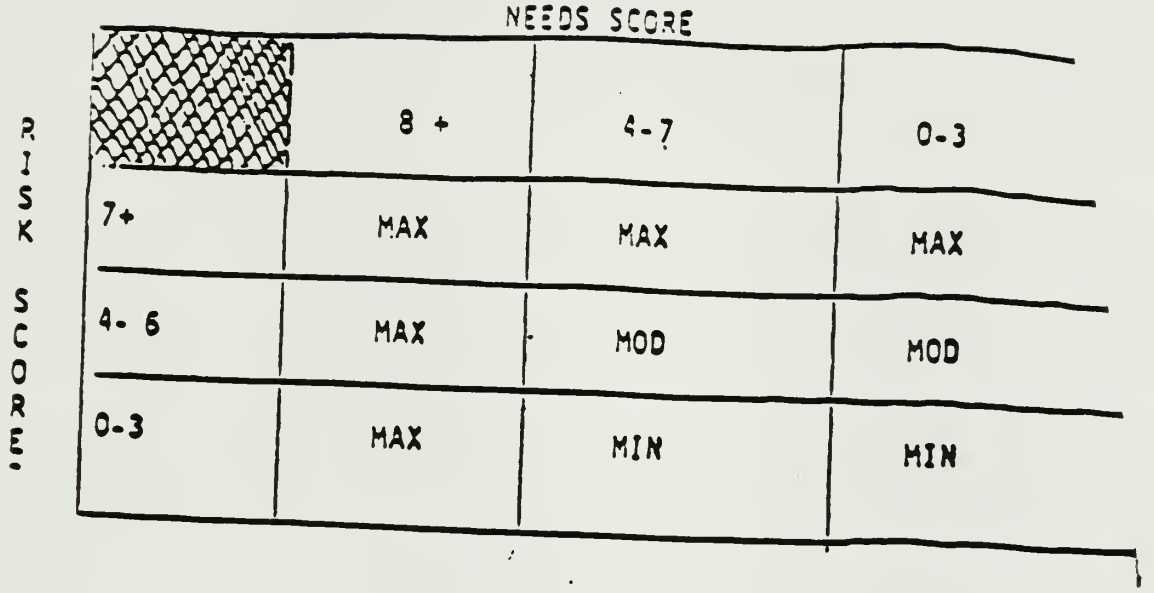
Institution Number	Parolee Name Last First MI		(7) (8-9)
Release Date	Region/ District	Parole Officer Last Name	(10-11) (6-39) (40-69)

	NEEDS SCORE	RISK SCORE
		(50)
	(63)	(51)
	(64)	(52)
	(65)	(53)
	(66)	(54)
	(67)	(55)
		(56)
	(68)	
		(57)
		(58)
	(69)	
		(59)
		(60)
	(70)	
TOTAL RISK SCORE		(61-62)
	(71)	
TOTAL NEEDS SCORE	(72-73)	
	(74-75)	
		(76)

Level of Supervision (Check (✓) one):

☐ Maximum ☐ Moderate ☐ Minimum

APPENDIX B



How to Use This Chart

1. Determine the parolee's Risk Score.
2. Place a ruler under the appropriate Risk Score in the le
3. Determine the parolee's Needs Score.
4. Follow a vertical line for the appropriate Needs Score t where it meets the appropriate Risk Score.
5. Where the two lines meet, this it the level of supervisi upon the combined Risk/Needs Score.